

**In the Claims:**

1. (Currently amended) A method for increasing rate of thermal inactivation of gram negative pathogens in an uncooked meat-based nutriment, comprising:

contacting an untreated nutriment with an acidulant to give a treated nutriment; and

heating the treated nutriment for an amount of time sufficient to inactive the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment, wherein the acidulant comprises: (a) an acidic, or low pH, solution of sparingly-soluble Group IIA complexes ("AGIIS"); (b) a highly acidic metalated mixture of inorganic acid ("HAMMIA"); (c) a highly acidic metalated organic acid ("HAMO"); (d) a mixture of the above; or (e) an adduct of each of the above, and wherein the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment is about 30% to about 75% less than the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the untreated nutriment.

2. (Cancelled).

3. (Cancelled).

4. (Currently amended) A method for increasing rate of thermal inactivation of gram negative pathogens in an uncooked meat-based nutriment, comprising:

contacting an untreated nutriment with a solution or suspension of an acidic sparingly-soluble Group IIA complex ("AGIIS") to give a treated nutriment, wherein the AGIIS is isolated from a mixture comprising a mineral acid and a Group IIA hydroxide, or a Group IIA salt of a dibasic acid, or a mixture of the two; and

heating the treated nutriment for an amount of time sufficient to inactive the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment, wherein the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment is about 30% to about 75% less than the

amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the untreated nutriment.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the Group IIA hydroxide comprises calcium hydroxide, the mineral acid comprises sulfuric acid, and the Group IIA salt of a dibasic acid comprises calcium sulfate.

6. (Original) The method of claim 4, further comprising adding an additive to the AGIIS.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the additive comprises an alcohol.

8. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the additive comprises an organic acid or an periodic acid.

9. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the additive comprises a surfactant.

10. (Cancelled).

11. (Cancelled).

12. (Currently amended) A method for increasing rate of thermal inactivation of gram negative pathogens in an uncooked meat-based nutriment comprising:

contacting a solution or suspension of an acidic sparingly-soluble Group IIA complex ("AGIIS") with a carrier to give a constituted carrier, wherein the AGIIS is isolated from a mixture comprising a mineral acid and a Group IIA hydroxide, or a Group IIA salt of a dibasic acid, or a mixture of the two;

blending the constituted carrier with an untreated nutriment to give a treated nutriment; and

heating the treated nutriment for an amount of time sufficient to inactivate the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment, wherein the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment is about 30% to about 75% less than the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the untreated nutriment.

13. (Currently amended) A method for increasing rate of thermal inactivation of gram negative pathogens in an uncooked meat-based nutriment comprising:

contacting a solution or suspension of an acidic sparingly-soluble Group IIA complex (“AGIIS”) with an additive and with a carrier to give a constituted carrier having the additive, wherein the AGIIS is isolated from a mixture comprising a mineral acid and a Group IIA hydroxide, or a Group IIA salt of a dibasic acid, or a mixture of the two;

blending an untreated nutriment with the constituted carrier having the additive to give a treated nutriment; and

heating the treated nutriment for an amount of time sufficient to inactivate the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment, wherein the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment is about 30% to about 75% less than the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the untreated nutriment.

Claims 14 – 32 (Cancelled).

33. (Currently amended) A method for increasing rate of thermal inactivation of gram negative pathogens in an uncooked meat-based nutriment, comprising:

chilling an untreated nutriment to give a chilled nutriment;

contacting the chilled nutriment with an acidulant to give a chilled treated nutriment;

and

heating the chilled treated nutriment for an amount of time sufficient to inactivate the gram negative pathogens in the chilled treated nutriment, wherein the acidulant comprises: (a) an acidic, or low pH, solution of sparingly-soluble Group IIA complexes ("AGIIS"); (b) a highly acidic metalated mixture of inorganic acid ("HAMMIA"); (c) a highly acidic metalated organic acid ("HAMO"); (d) a mixture of the above; or (e) an adduct of each of the above, and wherein the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment is about 30% to about 75% less than the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the untreated nutriment.

34. (Cancelled).

35. (Cancelled).

36. (Previously amended) The method of claim 33, wherein the chilled treated nutriment is a frozen nutriment.

37. (Currently amended) A method for increasing rate of thermal inactivation of gram negative pathogens in an uncooked meat-based nutriment, comprising:

contacting an untreated nutriment with an acidulant to give a treated nutriment;

chilling the treated nutriment; and

heating the treated nutriment for an amount of time sufficient to inactivate the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment, wherein the acidulant comprises: (a) an acidic, or low pH, solution of sparingly-soluble Group IIA complexes ("AGIIS"); (b) a highly acidic metalated mixture of inorganic acid ("HAMMIA"); (c) a highly acidic metalated organic acid ("HAMO"); (d) a mixture of the above; or (e) an adduct of each of the above, and wherein the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the treated nutriment is about 30% to about 75% less than the amount of time required to inactivate 90% of the gram negative pathogens in the untreated nutriment.

38. (Cancelled).

39. (Original) The method of claim 37, wherein the nutriment comprises an animal product, a plant product, a beverage, or a mixture thereof.

40. (Original) The method of claim 37, wherein the chilled nutriment is a frozen nutriment.

41. (Previously amended) A method of extending case shelf-life of an uncooked meat-based nutriment, comprising:

contacting the nutriment with an acidulant wherein the acidulant comprises: (a) an acidic, or low pH, solution of sparingly-soluble Group IIA complexes ("AGIIS"); (b) a highly acidic metalated mixture of inorganic acid ("HAMMIA"); (c) a highly acidic metalated organic acid ("HAMO"); (d) a mixture of the above; or (e) an adduct of each of the above; and

placing the nutriment in a case.

42. (Cancelled).

43. (Cancelled).